



Slovakia and United States sign Defense Cooperation Agreement

(4 February) "Today marks a special and important milestone for Slovakia's bilateral relationship and defence cooperation with the United States of America," Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' announced after signing the Agreement on Defense Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C.

On behalf of the U.S. Government, the DCA was signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken. The Agreement and its benefits for both countries were appreciated by his Slovak counterpart, Foreign and European Affairs Minister Ivan Korčok.

Speaking on the occasion, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "Bilateral cooperation between Slovakia and the United States has been excellent in the long term. Military cooperation with the United States has significantly contributed to the process of successful transformation and modernisation of the Slovak Armed Forces, especially the Slovak Air Force and the Special Operations Forces. Today we are putting our cooperation on an appropriate legal footing. It is also an expression of our shared commitment to transatlantic security as NATO Allies." He continued: "We are close partners, we are close friends, and we are close allies. This Agreement is another step in our long-term objective of bringing this invaluable relationship to a higher level."

The U.S.-SVK DCA contains the interpretation clauses of the two countries. They both acknowledge a shared perception of the Agreement, whilst fully respecting each other's sovereignty and laws.

The Defense Cooperation Agreement is a standard agreement to deliver deeper and extended defence cooperation that the United States offers to its partners, including U.S. investments in the partner's defence capabilities and infrastructure through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). Alongside Slovakia, 23 out of the 30 NATO Member States already have the DCA or an equivalent status agreement. "The strengthening of defence cooperation with the main guarantor of our security at a time of deepening insecurities and geopolitical tensions is a natural step for the Slovak Republic. We must also remember that we've done so as the last country on the EU's and NATO's eastern border," emphasised Foreign Minister Ivan Korčok. The U.S.-SVK DCA still requires formal approval from Parliament and ratification by the president before coming into force.



Bids for tracked IFVs

(1 February) The bids for Slovakia's Tracked Infantry Fighting Vehicle Programme have been submitted by four countries: Hungary, Sweden, Spain and Poland.

As part of Phase 1, the MOD plans to purchase 152 tracked IFVs via a Government-to-Government (G2G) Agreement. The total Agreement price is estimated at €1.739bn VAT included, while the vehicles themselves could cost some €1.447bn. Once the bids have been evaluated, the MOD is expected to submit the preferred solution to the Cabinet by the end of June 2022.

The bids will be assessed on their merits. Out of 100% of the total score, the total Agreement price is worth 35%, the technical specifications 30%, logistics support 10%, and the SVK defence industry's role in the programme 25%. Slovak industry content should account for at least 40% of the total acquisition price.

Ministry of Defence to give out 500,000 euros in grants

(31 January) The MOD has issued a call for submission of grant applications in 2022. The MOD has set aside 500,000 euros for impactful projects in the Defence community. In addition to civic associations, foundations, interest groupings, non-investment funds and non-profit organisations, those eligible for grants under the new arrangements are also municipalities. Grant applications close 31 March 2022.

The aim of the MOD Grant Scheme is to support the work of the NGO sector, academia and local councils, whilst using their knowledge, expertise and experience to help raise public awareness of the MOD's and Armed Forces' priorities, as well as actively supporting public debate on topics related to the security and defence of the State. The MOD is to support projects aimed at educational events, military themed activities for young people, and sporting, cultural and social activities which can help educate Slovak citizens on patriotism, keep the public informed of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, and train Slovak citizens for the defence of Slovakia, as well as promoting the SVK Armed Forces, catering for the cultural, spiritual and social needs of regular soldiers, reservists and veterans, and supporting top level and high performing athletes and sporting talents. Grants are also offered for projects to facilitate the recruitment process in the SVK Armed Forces or to protect and develop cultural and historical heritage, with special focus on military history. Grants may also be awarded to cover the costs associated with participation in events organised by international organisations that work closely with armed forces.

Applications for grants for projects should be linked to the MOD's 2022 priority areas. These include beefing up the readiness of inhabitants for the defence of the State; developing a modern patriotism; presenting service personnel through the eyes of the public; supporting women in defence; improving care for war veterans; preserving the memory of freedom and democracy fighters; looking after war and military memorials; building up resilience against hybrid threats; eliminating hate speech and intolerance; tackling climate change and its implications for the MOD and the Armed Forces; supporting the Slovak V4 Presidency in light of NATO's collective defence; and addressing the future of NATO and the EU. Any further enquiries on the grants process should be sent by email to dolacie@mod.gov.sk. More detailed information can be found on the MOD's website.

- On 1 and 2 Feb, SVK Air Force HQ was visited by Commander of the Czech Air Force Maj Gen Petr Mikulanka. He was welcomed to 81 Wing Sliach by Deputy Commander of the Slovak Air Force Brig Gen Ladislav Dovhun. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the support and training of SVK radar control personnel in SVK airspace in cooperation with the Czech Air Force.

- The 32nd International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference (IMCCC) was held online on 2-3 Feb, with this year's theme Religious Freedom During Peace and War. The conference was attended by military chaplains representing 40 nations. Chaplain Capt Dávid Vargaštok substituted for Chaplain in Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Col Viktor Sabo.

- On 31 Jan, members of 103 CBRND Battalion Rožňava staged a farewell ceremony for **Stefan Bova**, who served as Chief of Base and Commander CBRND Brigade. After leaving the Service, he continued to work as an internationally recognised civilian expert in the mobile identification of chemical agents, biological means and radionuclides at 103 CBRND Bn RV. On behalf of the Defence Staff, Chief of CBRND Col Oliver Toderiška bid farewell to him and presented him with a golden CHP-71 chemical warfare agent identifier. Commander Slovak Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach awarded him the SVK Army Commemorative Medal.

- On 28 Mar - 1 Apr, 57 Independent Special Operations Forces Battalion will conduct a **selection process** for SOF candidates from among SVK Armed Forces personnel to fill INFOOPS, CIMIC, PSYOPS roles. More information is available on the internet.

- On 25 Feb, the director of the **Topographic Institute Banská Bystrica** issued a call for submission of applications for a vacancy – a Senior Assistant – Group Leader, Planning and Control Section. Those interested can contact Lt Col Jozefa Váša by phone on 0960 504303 and by email at jozef.vas@mil.sk.

- 23 military chaplains from 10 Allied nations attended the **NATO Chaplain Operations Course** at NATO School Oberammergau, Germany. Slovakia was represented by Director of the Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Maj Vladimír Varga.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as 19 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 7 to 13 February 2022. Over the same period, the SVK military will conduct road movements from/to: Prešov – Michalovce and back, Liptovský Mikuláš – Martin and back, Šurany – Kuchyňa and back, Sliach – Moldava nad Bodvou, Sliach – Trenčín and back, Hlohovec – Lešť and back, Topoľčany – Rožňava, Lešť – Martin and back, Trebišov – Nemšová and back, Rašov – Martin, Mierovo – Martin and back, Trebišov – Prešov and back, Nemšová – Rašov, Kuchyňa – Sereď and back, Prešov – Michalovce, Liptovský Mikuláš – Nemšová, Nitra – Sereď and back, Prešov – Nemecká and back, Nitra – Zemianske Kostofany and back, Levice – Nemšová, Nemšová – Prešov, Sliach – Zemianske Kostofany and back, Sliach – Nemšová, Nemšová – Sereď, Nemšová – Hlohovec and back, Nitra – Levice, Liptovský Mikuláš – Lešť and back, Martin – Michalovce and back, Prešov – Zemianske Kostofany and back, and within the cities of Michalovce, Rožňava, Nitra, Sereď and Prešov. Also planned for next week are the following SVK military rail movements from/to: Zemianske Kostofany – Prešov, Michalovce – Martin, and Martin – Sása-Pliešovce and back.

Course for survival and movement in snowy mountains

(3 February) Krížna, located in the Great Fatra Mountains, is a peak where avalanches often come down its slopes. It

accommodates 81 Wing Sliach's radio navigation and communications systems. Based on the Unit's request, this year's course on survival and movement in snowy mountain conditions was held at and around Krížna.

Traditionally, the week-long Mountain Winter Course is prepared by specialists of the Training Centre (TC) Lešť.

The aim of the course was to provide information and to develop skills essential for soldiers to move across snowy terrain and to stay out safe in winter mountains. The cadets practised searching for missing people in an avalanche with the use of avalanche rescue devices and probes, giving first aid, and arresting a fall with an ice axe or crampons after a slip on ice

Army drivers undergo training

(31 January) The fourth January week saw the SVK Army's tracked and wheeled IFV drivers undergo training at 13 Mechanised Battalion. They drove their vehicles over difficult terrain on Levice Garrison's training ground, operating at day and night. This was followed by rail movement training. As part of this training at a railhead, the vehicle commanders assisted the drivers with hand signals, while they practised taking their heavy vehicles on flatbed wagons before fastening them to the wagons.

Ex Iceman tests resilience



(1 February) Members of the Combat Support Company, part of 22 Mech Bn Michalovce, underwent intense 96-hour training in winter conditions on Michalovce Garrison's training ground at Biela Hora. Ex Iceman tested the Unit's ability to

continuously operate in adverse climate conditions. On Day 1, the company moved in positions for a defensive operation to protect the sovereignty and integrity of SVK borders and to defend the critical infrastructure sites. In doing so, soldiers had to cope with extremely low temperatures and increased demands on renewing their strength and sustaining their warfighting readiness.

The presence of a military psychologist was beneficial. The training culminated with a 27-km loaded march from Biela Hora to Poruba pod Vihorlatom where they undertook marksmanship training on the local ranges.

Military topography in real life

(1 February) 1st-year cadets of the Security and Defence of the State Programme were instructed and tested in military topography in the field. The aim of the activity was to develop their practical skills while marching with and without the topographical map, orienteering in unfamiliar terrain, determining one's position, and processing mission-specific graphic documents. The cadets were able to improve their organisational competence in preparing and carrying out a tactical march and to increase their psychological and physical condition. Under time stress, they planned the tactical march, evaluated its axis, and set the navigation data for each section of the movement. During the march, they fulfilled topographical tasks at control points. According to Maj Miroslav Mušinka and Maj Michal Vajda, the officer in charge of the training, all the cadets managed to accomplish the tasks, most of them being rated as excellent.



or hardened snow. They also built shelters, chose suitable places for bivouacking, moved material in tough mountain

conditions, as well as preparing food. Among those who appreciated the course very much were Senior Technician MSgt MSgt Róbert Králik and his colleagues Sgt 1C Ján Ondris, Commander Air Traffic Control Support Group 1Lt Matej Devečka, Senior Officer 1Lt Marián Škulíty and their colleagues from the Parachute Airborne Service SSgt Martin Ďurica and Cpl Tomáš Krízan.

"When maintaining or repairing our systems at Krížna, we must move across challenging terrain. That's why we familiarised ourselves with the safety precautions for avalanches and other dangerous emergencies," said MSgt Králik.